

Message Text

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11

ACTION EA-09

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FM AMEMBASSY KUALA LUMPUR

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 2740

INFO AMEMBASSY BANGKOK

AMEMBASSY JAKARTA

AMEMBASSY MANILA

AMEMBASSY SEOUL

AMEMBASSY SINGAPORE

AMEMBASSY TOKYO

US MISSION USUN NEW YORK 661

C O N F I D E N T I A L KUALA LUMPUR 1422

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PFOR, MY, KS

SUBJ: ROK ARMED FORCES CHIEF CALLS ON PM HUSSEIN

1. SUMMARY. ROK CHAIRMAN OF THE JOINT CHIEFS OF STAFF RO CALLED ON PM HUSSEIN ONN MAR 1 AT CONCLUSION OF FOUR-DAY VISIT TO MALAYSIA. WHILE THIS SEEMS TO CONTRADICT RECENT GOM POLICY OF BALANCING NORTH AND SOUTH KOREA, IT IS TOO EARLY TO JUDGE WHETHER IT REPRESENTS SHIFT TO MORE PRO-ROK POSITION. END SUMMARY.

2. GENERAL RO JAE-HYUN, CHAIRMAN OF THE JOINT CHIEFS OF STAFF OF THE REPUBLIC OF KOREA ARMED FORCES COMPLETED A FOUR-DAY VISIT TO MALAYSIA MAR 11 WITH A CALL ON PRIME MINISTER HUSSEIN ONN. THE CALL ON HUSSEIN IS SIGNIFICANT BECAUSE THE GOM, SINCE ITS RECOGNITION OF NORTH KOREA IN JUN 1973 HAS BEEN EXTREMELY CAREFUL TO GIVE BALANCED ATTENTION TO BOTH KOREAS AND HAS AVOIDED SPECIAL TREATMENT FOR SEOUL, WITH WHOM MALAYSIA SHARES A
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CERTAIN ANTI-COMMUNIST AFFINITY, TO PRECLUDE PYONGYANG

DEMANDING EQUAL TIME.

3. ROK ARMED FORCES ATTACHE COL. CHONG HO HAN HERE TOLD DATT AND POLOFF THAT MALAYSIAN DEFENSE MINISTRY WELCOMED RO'S VISIT, BUT THAT MFA TYPES HAD NOT BEEN ENTHUSIASTIC. HAN SPOKE DISPARAGINGLY OF THE GOM DIPLOMATIC POLICY OF BALANCE BETWEEN NORTH AND SOUTH KOREA AND IMPLIED THAT MFA, ESPECIALLY SECRETARY GENERAL ZAITON IBRAHIM BIN AHMAD, WHO HE NOTED "HAS BEEN AMBASSADOR IN MOSCOW" HAD OPPOSED THE CALL ON THE PM. HAN ALSO SUGGESTED THAT IF RAZAK WERE STILL PM, RO MIGHT WEEL HAVE NOT CALLED ON HIM.

4. COMMENT: IT IS NOT CLEAR TO US WHETHER RO'S CALL ON HUSSEIN IS A SIGNAL THAT THE GOM MAY BE LEANING TOWARD THE ROK IN THE KOREAN BALANCING ACT. ALTHOUGH IN SUCH MATTERS AS DIPLOMATIC AND TRADE DELEGATIONS, THE GOM HAS PURSUED A CAREFULLY MEASURED POLICY OF EQUAL TREATMENT, ON THE MILITARY SIDE THE CONTACTS HAVE BEEN ENTIRELY WITH THE SOUTH. FOR EXAMPLE, AN ROK DEFENSE COLLEGE DELEGATION VISITED KUALA LUMPUR IN MAY 1975 AND TWO ROK NAVY VESSELS VISITED PORT KLANG IN NOV 1974. ALSO, WHEN THE ROK CHIEF OF THE NAVAL STAFF VISITED MALAYSIA IN FEB 1973 (ALTHOUGH THIS WAS BEFORE RELATIONS WERE ESTABLISHED WITH PYONGYANG), HE CALLED ON PM RAZAK. SO THE GOM DECISION TO INVITE RO TO MEET WITH THE PRIME MINISTER IS NOT WITHOUT PRECEDENT, EVEN THOUGH IT DOES SEEM TO VIOLATE THE PRINCIPLE OF EQUAL TREATMENT. SOUTH KOREAN FOREIGN MINISTER PARK TONG JIN WILL VISIT MALAYSIA NEXT WEEK (MAR 17-19), AND THIS MAY AFFORD AN OPPORTUNITY TO DETERMINE WHETHER OR NOT PM HUSSEIN IS INCLINED TO FAVOR SEOUL MORE THAN HIS PREDECESSOR DID AND WHAT THIS MIGHT MEAN FOR MALAYSIA'S VOTING ON THE KOREA QUESTION AT THE UPCOMING NON-ALIGNED CONFERENCE OR AT THE UN GENERAL ASSEMBLY THIS YEAR.
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